

Act. This legislation would establish a 5-year, \$50 million grant program through which states, localities, and nonprofits could apply for funding to strengthen existing low-income car ownership programs or create new ones.

The bill would also facilitate car ownership through the use of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs). IDAs are special savings accounts for very low-income individuals through which, as an incentive to save, a person's contributions to the account are matched by public and private funding. States can use funds authorized by a little-known law called the Assets for Independence Act (AFIA) to match participant contributions to IDAs. However, when IDA contributions are matched using AFIA funds, withdrawals may be used for only three qualified expenses: homeownership, post-secondary education, and starting a business. This bill would expand permissible IDA uses under AFIA matching rules to include the purchase of a car.

In addition to AFIA dollars, states can use their Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to match IDA contributions. While the purchase of a car is not included in the underlying TANF statute as a qualifying IDA expense, the Department of Health and Human Services has clarified that states can elect to permit withdrawals for car purchases when the participant's IDA is matched with federal TANF dollars. However, some states have found that, as a result of choosing this option, the IDA can be considered an asset when determining the participant's eligibility for other programs such as food stamps.

This legislation would remove this barrier and allow states to use TANF dollars to match IDA savings for a car without the account's assets being counted against the participant's eligibility for other important programs.

Mr. Speaker, vehicle ownership is critical to matching the available workforce with available jobs. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and enact it in a timely manner so that low-income Americans can get behind the wheel, improve their job prospects, and gain greater opportunities to provide for their families.

CONGRATULATIONS TO PLUMBERS LOCAL UNION 210 2005 APPRENTICE GRADUATES

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor and admiration that I offer congratulations to many of Northwest Indiana's most talented, dedicated, and hardworking individuals. On Friday, June 10, 2005, the Plumbers Local Union 210 will honor the completion class of 2005 at the Annual Apprentice Completion Banquet which will be held at the Patio Banquet Hall in Merrillville, Indiana.

They will be recognizing and honoring the 2005 Apprentice Graduates. The individuals who have completed the apprentice training are: Jamie Anderson, Damon Berry, Jesse Brill, Robert Burkus, Raymond Crawford, Michael Fanning, Kenneth Francus, Jason Kennedy, Robin Marshal, Josh Musser, Scott Norwine, Joe Palek, Joshua Poston, Daniel Rosenbaum, Collin Sanders, Brian Schoff,

Kevin Stonehill, Lee Thomas, Chris Tomko, and John Zbell.

Northwest Indiana has a rich history of excellence in its craftsmanship and loyalty by its tradesmen. These graduates are all outstanding examples of each. They have mastered their trade and have demonstrated their loyalty to both the union and the community through their hard work and self-sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and my other distinguished colleagues join me in congratulating these hardworking individuals. Along with all the other men and women of Northwest Indiana's unions, these individuals have contributed to the growth and development to the economy of the First Congressional District, and I am very proud to honor them in Washington, D.C.

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. DORIS O. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Yom HaAtzmaut, the anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel.

On this day 57 years ago in 1948, the British Mandate over Palestine expired and cleared the path for the State of Israel to be created. Despite her continued struggle for existence, Israel has overcome these difficulties to thrive and prosper. Israelis have become world leaders in agriculture, technology, medicine and science.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Israel for its continued support through the decades. Since its creation, Israel has been one of America's staunchest allies. And as the sole democracy in the Middle East, we as a nation must maintain our support and ensure our ally's continued survival.

INTRODUCING THE RAIL SECURITY ACT OF 2005

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, today, together with Subcommittee on Railroads Ranking Member CORRINE BROWN and 12 of my other colleagues, I introduce the "Rail Security Act of 2005."

It's been almost 4 years since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and one year since the terrorist train bombing in Madrid, Spain, that killed 191 people and wounded more than 1,800 others, making it the deadliest terrorist attack against European civilians since 1988. Last month, Spanish authorities found in the home of a suspect in the Madrid bombing, a rough sketch of New York's Grand Central Terminal, the significance of which is being evaluated.

The Madrid bombing was just the latest in a series of attacks on railroads worldwide. Between 1998 and 2003, there were 181 attacks worldwide on trains and rail-related targets such as depots, ticket stations, and rail bridges, resulting in an estimated 431 deaths and several thousand injuries. Yet the Federal

Government has done little to enhance rail security in the United States. The Madrid bombing alone should have served as a wake-up call to Congress and the Administration.

Last year, the United States spent \$4.4 billion on aviation security, but only \$115 million on rail and transit security, even though five times as many people take trains as planes every day. The President's FY2006 Budget for the Transportation Security Administration proposes \$4.7 billion for aviation security and just \$32 million for highways, passenger rail, buses and other modes of surface transportation.

Amtrak alone has requested \$100 million in security upgrades and nearly \$600 million for fire and life-safety improvements to tunnels on the Northeast Corridor in New York, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. Securing Amtrak and other rail facilities is a formidable task, but Congress must get it done. Of course, that requires Federal leadership and Federal resources, both of which are long overdue. For 4 years now, our country still hasn't produced a national transportation security plan.

The Aviation Transportation Security Act of 2001 originally required the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to develop and submit to Congress a National Strategy for Transportation Security. In 2003, then Transportation Security Administrator Admiral James Loy promised the plan by the end of that year. Most recently, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorist Prevention Act of 2004 required the plan to be produced by April 1, 2005. Unfortunately, the Department has pushed back the completion date for this document again. On April 1, 2005, the DHS sent a letter to Congress stating that the Department now intends to produce the National Strategy for Transportation Security to Congress in two to three months.

We cannot continue to delay security improvements while awaiting the National Strategy. Congress needs to act now to protect the safety and security of our Nation's railroads, rail passengers, rail workers, and communities served by them.

The Rail Security Act of 2005 requires that within 180 days of enactment, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of Transportation shall develop and implement a railroad security assessment, a railroad security plan, and prioritized recommendations for improving railroad security. The bill also requires the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of Transportation to execute a memorandum of agreement governing the roles and responsibilities of their Departments in addressing railroad transportation security matters.

The bill authorizes more than \$1 billion to safeguard our Nation's rail network from terrorist threats, \$500 million of which is authorized for grants to State and local governments, railroad carriers, rail labor, and others for costs incurred for preventing 3 or responding to terrorist activities or other security threats to intercity passenger rail and freight rail service.

Under the bill, Amtrak will receive \$100 million for security upgrades, plus a total of \$597 million to make fire and life-safety improvements to tunnels on the Northeast Corridor in New York, New York, Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. This funding is critical to protect Amtrak's 25 million passengers, two-thirds of whom travel along the Northeast Corridor.